

Running a Food Business from Home

This guidance note is intended for anyone who plans to run a retail-style food business from their domestic premises. Running a home food business can be an attractive opportunity but carries a great amount of responsibility.

When deciding if it is possible to operate a food business from your home you must ensure that you have sufficient facilities and space to produce food safely and comply with food safety law. Large scale catering for high numbers of customers is unlikely to be possible from domestic premises and the use of commercial kitchens would be more appropriate.

As a general principal, if you prepare **high risk foods** then the standards required of you will be much greater than that of a business dealing with low-risk foodstuffs. High-risk foods are ready-to-eat foods which under favourable conditions, support the multiplication of pathogenic bacteria. These foods are typically high in protein, requiring protection and refrigerated storage. They include:

- All cooked meat & poultry
- Cooked meat products including gravy & stock
- Milk, cream, artificial cream, custards and dairy produce
- Cooked eggs and egg products
- Shellfish and other seafood such as oysters
- Cooked rice

Registration

Your home will need to be registered with the Council as a food business. This is free and is legal requirement that must be done before starting. You can contact Environmental Health at East Dunbartonshire Council for a registration form by telephone 0300 123 4510 or by email environmental.health@eastdunbarton.gov.uk

Planning Permission

You may need to obtain planning permission to run a business from home so take advice from the council planning department on 0300 123 4510.

Business Rates

You may have to pay rates if you use part of your property for a business. You can contact the revenues department on 0300 123 4510 to seek advice.

Insurance

We strongly recommend you to take out insurance to cover claims against you (third party insurance) in the same way as any other business. You should consult your solicitor or insurance agent about this.

Restrictive Covenants

Especially in older properties, you may find the Deeds contain clauses that prevent you from carrying out certain activities and running a food business may be one of them. Again, you should consult your solicitor.

Mortgage Restrictions

If you have a mortgage on your property you should contact your lender and discuss your intentions.

FOOD SAFETY LAW

The laws on food safety apply in the same way to a business run from home as they do to all other commercial premises. You will be liable to regular inspections by officers from the Council's Environmental Health service and you may face legal action if you are found to be breaking the food hygiene laws. The typical legislation referred to on inspections includes:

- Regulation EC 852/2004 'The Hygiene of Foodstuffs' (includes requirement to implement a documented food safety system, premises layout, structure, equipment, protection of food, training)
- The Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006 – Officer powers and temperature control requirements
- The Food Information (Scotland) Regulations 2014 – requirements for accurate information to be presented to customers regarding labelling, composition, advertising and traceability of foods.

Structure

The premises used for food preparation and storage are to be sited, designed, constructed and kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition so as to avoid the risk of contamination.

Lighting

Adequate lighting is necessary to provide a safe working environment and to facilitate the hygienic preparation of food.

Ventilation

Adequate ventilation is necessary to remove fumes and steam and to keep your premises cool.

Equipment

All food equipment should be safe, kept in good order, be washable and kept clean.

Wash facilities and cleaning

At least one sink must be provided for washing purposes. Ideally two should be provided; one sink for the preparation/washing of food and the other for the washing of equipment and utensils. Please seek advice about cleaning chemical specifications that are required.

Hand Washing Facilities

A separate facility must be provided for hand washing purposes, reasonably accessible from the kitchen. This facility must be provided with hot and cold water, soap and hand drying materials.

Toilet Facilities

Facilities used by persons engaged in the handling of food for public consumption must be in good repair and maintained in a clean condition. Toilets are not to open directly into food preparation areas.

Refuse Storage

Waste stored in the kitchen must be in a clean bin with a close-fitting lid. Outdoor refuse storage must be kept clean and tidy.

Pest Control

The premises must be free from rodent and insect infestation and proofed to reduce the risk of such infestation. Windows and doors should be kept closed during preparation times.

Temperature Control

Food within a refrigerator should be kept chilled, ideally below 5°C. Frozen food in the freezer should be at -18°C, or cooler. It is good practice to put shelf thermometers in these appliances to monitor their temperatures.

Ideally, separate refrigerators/freezers should be used for domestic and commercial foods.

Temperature probes can be used to verify core food temperatures.

Pets

Pets and their food should be kept well away from food preparation and storage areas at all times.

First Aid

First aid materials must be provided for the use within the kitchen in the form of waterproof plaster, bandages and dressings. You do not have to provide blues plasters by law, but obviously if these drop in the food they are easier to see.

Personal Hygiene

Clean washable clothing must be worn by all persons engaged in the handling of food for public consumption and a high standard of personal cleanliness maintained.

Washing machines

Ideally washing machines should be sited away from food preparation and storage areas. However if there is no alternative, an agreement may be reached with the visiting officer that such a machine may be used provided its use is confined to such times as food is not being prepared.

Water Supply

Only potable (wholesome) water is to be used. If your water is not supplied by mains water you must by law have it tested to make sure it is wholesome.

HACCP

All food businesses are required to assess the food hazards in their operation and identify steps that are critical to food safety, i.e. cooking food to kill bacteria.

Proprietors must then ensure that controls are put in place to manage risks and monitor them to make sure they are working. HACCP documentation will be proportionate to the nature and size of the business.

The CookSafe document was created to assist food business operators in complying with legal requirements -> <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/cooksafe>

Training

Food business operators must ensure that all food handlers (including themselves) are adequately supervised, instructed and/or trained commensurate to the food operations involved.

Food businesses and internet sales

Certain businesses offer their goods for sale via the internet. Although such trade is not specifically referred to in EC Reg. 852/2004, such businesses fall within the remit of a food business and the relevant requirements of food law are applicable to them.

Further Information

Please note that the above mentioned points are not exhaustive and other works specific to any particular premises may well be necessary. An Officer from the department will be happy to make an informal visit and advise you accordingly. You can contact the Environmental Health Service on 0300 123 4510 or environmental.health@eastdunbarton.gov.uk

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